

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method in a computer within a computer network for automatically swapping application tasks running within said computer when access from said computer to a remote network site is delayed, said method comprising the steps of:

initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously running at said local network site;

retrieving data from said remote network site, in response to initiating said link;

automatically switching focus from said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application; and

switching focus back to said communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data being retrieved.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of automatically switching focus back to said communications application from said multi-tasking application after expiration of a predetermined time period.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the steps of:

distinguishing between a time-consuming link and an immediate link; and

determining if said link comprises a time-consuming link or an immediate link.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the step of automatically switching focus from said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application, further comprises the step of:

automatically switching focus from said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application, only if said link comprises a time-consuming link.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the step of switching focus back to said communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data being retrieved, further comprises the steps of:

notifying a user that said data has been retrieved; and

switching focus back to said communications application, in response to user input.

6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the steps of

identifying a ring of applications running at said local network site wherein said ring of applications includes a current application followed by a next application;

4 automatically switching focus from a current application included in said ring of
5 applications to a next application included in said ring of applications running at said
6 local network site, in response to said data being retrieved; and

7 maintaining focus on a current application if a next application in said ring of
8 applications remains unidentified.

1 7. The method of claim 6 further comprising the steps of:

2 identifying a pause in current activity; and

3
4 discontinuing focus switching until a pause in current activity is identified.

1 8. The method of claim 7 wherein the step of initiating a link from a local network
2 site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking
3 applications are simultaneously running at said local network site, further comprises the
4 step of:

5 initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site utilizing a
6 communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously running
7 at said local network site, such that said communications application comprises a browser
8 application.

1 9. A system in a computer network for automatically swapping application tasks
2 running within a computer within said computer network when access from said computer
3 to a remote network site is delayed, said system comprising:

4 means for initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site
5 utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously
6 running at said local network site;

7 means for retrieving data from said remote network site, in response to initiating
8 said link;

9 means for automatically switching focus from said communications application to
10 a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response
11 to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application;
12 and

13 means for switching focus back to said communications application from said
14 multi-tasking application, in response to said data being retrieved.

1 10. The system of claim 9 further comprising means for automatically switching focus
2 back to said communications application from said multi-tasking application after
3 expiration of a predetermined time period.

1 11. The system of claim 10 further comprising:

2 means for distinguishing between a time-consuming link and an immediate link;
3 and

4 means for determining if said link comprises a time-consuming link or an
5 immediate link.

1 12. The system of claim 11 wherein said means for automatically switching focus from
2 said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at
3 said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site
4 by said communications application, further comprises:

5 means for automatically switching focus from said communications application to
6 a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response
7 to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application,
8 only if said link comprises a time-consuming link.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein said means for switching focus back to said
communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data
being retrieved, further comprises:

means for notifying a user that said data has been retrieved; and

5 means for switching focus back to said communications application, in response
6 to user input.

1 14. The system of claim 13 further comprising:

2 means for identifying a ring of applications running at said local network site
3 wherein said ring of applications includes a current application followed by a next
4 application; and

5 means for automatically switching focus from a current application included in
6 said ring of applications to a next application included in said ring of applications running
7 at said local network site, in response to said data being retrieved; and

8 means for maintaining focus on a current application if a next application in said
9 ring of applications remains unidentified.

1 15. The system of claim 14 further comprising:

2 means for identifying a pause in current activity; and

3
4 means for discontinuing focus switching until a pause in current activity is
5 identified.

1 16. The system of claim 15 wherein said means for initiating a link from a local
2 network site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-
3 tasking applications are simultaneously running at said local network site, further
4 comprises:

5 means for initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site
6 utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously
7 running at said local network site, such that said communications application comprises
8 a browser application.

1 17. A program product residing in a computer memory of a computer within a
2 computer network for automatically swapping application tasks running within said
3 computer when access from said computer to a remote network site is delayed, said
4 system comprising:

5 instruction means residing in a computer for initiating a link from a local network
6 site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking
7 applications are simultaneously running at said local network site;

8 instruction means residing in a computer for retrieving data from said remote
9 network site, in response to initiating said link;

10 instruction means residing in a computer for automatically switching focus from
11 said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at
12 said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site
13 by said communications application; and

14 instruction means residing in a computer for switching focus back to said
15 communications application from said multi-tasking application, in response to said data
16 being retrieved.

1 18. The program product of claim 17 further comprising instruction means residing
2 in a computer for automatically switching focus back to said communications application
3 from said multi-tasking application after expiration of a predetermined time period.

1 19. The program product of claim 18 further comprising:

2 instruction means residing in a computer for distinguishing between a time-
3 consuming link and an immediate link; and

4 instruction means residing in a computer for determining if said link comprises a
5 time-consuming link or an immediate link.

1 20. The program product of claim 19 wherein said instruction means residing in a
2 computer for automatically switching focus from said communications application to a
3 multi-tasking application simultaneously running at said local network site, in response
4 to data being retrieved from said remote network site by said communications application,
5 further comprises:

6 instruction means residing in a computer for automatically switching focus from
7 said communications application to a multi-tasking application simultaneously running at
8 said local network site, in response to data being retrieved from said remote network site
9 by said communications application, only if said link comprises a time-consuming link.

1 21. The program product of claim 20 wherein said instruction means residing in a
2 computer for switching focus back to said communications application from said multi-
3 tasking application, in response to said data being retrieved, further comprises:

4 instruction means residing in a computer for notifying a user that said data has
5 been retrieved; and

6 instruction means residing in a computer for switching focus back to said
7 communications application, in response to user input.

1 22. The program product of claim 21 further comprising:

2 instruction means residing in a computer for identifying a ring of applications
3 running at said local network site wherein said ring of applications includes a current
4 application followed by a next application; and

5 instruction means residing in a computer for automatically switching focus from
6 a current application included in said ring of applications to a next application included
7 in said ring of applications running at said local network site, in response to said data
8 being retrieved; and

9 instruction means residing in a computer for maintaining focus on a current
10 application if a next application in said ring of applications remains unidentified.

1 23. The program product of claim 22 further comprising:

2 instruction means residing in a computer for identifying a pause in current activity;
3 and

4
5 instruction means residing in a computer for discontinuing focus switching until
6 a pause in current activity is identified.

1 24. The program product of claim 23 wherein said instruction means residing in a
2 computer for initiating a link from a local network site to a remote network site utilizing

3 a communications application while multi-tasking applications are simultaneously running
4 at said local network site, further comprises:

5 instruction means residing in a computer for initiating a link from a local network
6 site to a remote network site utilizing a communications application while multi-tasking
7 applications are simultaneously running at said local network site, such that said
8 communications application comprises a browser application.

1 25. The program product of claim 24 wherein each of said instruction means further
2 comprises signal bearing media.

3 26. The program product of claim 25 wherein said signal bearing media further
4 comprises transmission media.

5 27. The program product of claim 25 wherein said signal bearing media further
6 comprises recordable media.